

News Release

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Sacramento District
Public Affairs Office

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Corps of Engineers still accepting comments on proposed UC Merced project

The Army Corps of Engineers is still accepting comments on the University of California's application to build a campus at Merced. UC's permit application proposes to fill over 80 acres of waters, including vernal pools, on a 910-acre site adjacent to Yosemite Lake. The Corps' review process includes the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

"Analyzing potential effects on the environment for a project of this size is a complex process," said Nancy Haley, the Corps' Project Manager for the UC Merced permit application. "Because there have been some delays in the receipt of information necessary for the EIS, we're able to accept comments until at least January 1, 2004," Haley added. Such comments are valuable in addressing relevant issues and alternatives.

The public is invited to provide comments in writing to: Nancy Haley, Regulatory Branch, Army Corps of Engineers, 1325 J Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. Comments can also be sent to the Corps' regulatory website at: www.spk.usace.army.mil/cespk-co/regulatory/ucmerced/

The Corps received a complete permit application to build a new campus in February 2002. A permit is required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act from the Corps before any construction can occur in waters of the United States. Analyses that will be performed during the permit process include a review under NEPA and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Section 404 (b)(1) guidelines. These guidelines require the examination of on-site and off-site alternatives. After considering all alternatives and comments from the public, the Corps may only issue a permit for the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA). At this time, the Corps has not determined that the proposed location of the campus is the LEDPA.

Corps officials now expect to issue the draft EIS in the spring of 2004. Once the draft EIS is issued, the Corps will hold public meetings to gather comments on the proposed campus.

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